

forth below, were discussed at the interview. Subject to further review upon the filing of a written response, the Examiner stated at the interview that the differences between the claim language of the independent claims and the disclosure of the Sansone et al. reference appeared to preclude continued reliance on the Sansone et al. reference as an anticipating reference with regard to the claims of the present application.

First, as discussed at the interview, it was noted that the term "terminal equipment" as used in the claims is used in accordance with the usual meaning ascribed to that term by those of ordinary skill in the design of postal metering systems. The term "terminal equipment" means the equipment that is located at the user (customer), such as the postage meter itself. It appeared that in the Office Action dated September 3, 2003, the Examiner was giving this term a general meaning as referring to any equipment at a location in the system which could be considered to be a "terminal," and therefore the Examiner was relying on communications between the USPS facility and the data center for the purpose of comparing the disclosure of Sansone et al. to the claims of the present application. Referring to Figure 1 of the Sansone et al. reference, the Examiner was relying on communications between block 18 and block 20. Those of ordinary skill in the field of postage metering, however, clearly understand the term "terminal equipment" to refer to the blocks 10, 12 and 14 in Figure 1 of the Sansone et al. reference, and therefore if any communications taught in the Sansone et al. reference would be relevant to the claims of the present application, those communications must proceed between the block 18 and the respective blocks 10, 12 and 14.

Regardless of how this terminology is applied, as discussed at the interview, it is the position of the Applicant that none of the communications which take place in the Sansone et al. system conform to those set forth in the claims of the present application.

As discussed at the interview, an important feature distinguishing the claims of the present application over the disclosure of the Sansone et al. reference is the use of the transmitted message itself to serve as a means for verifying the accurate transmission of that message from the data center to the terminal equipment. In each of the independent claims of the present application, it is required that a message (service data) be transmitted from the data center to terminal equipment and that the terminal equipment generate an answerback message referring to (independent claims 1 and 17) the originally-transmitted message or data, and this answerback is then transmitted from the terminal equipment to the data center. The data center then uses this message or data that refers to the originally transmitted message for the purpose of verifying that the originally transmitted message was correctly sent. The data center then informs the terminal equipment that it is enabled to use the previously sent data.

Independent claims 12 and 28 more specifically refer to a coded message being formed as the answerback message, based on the originally-transmitted message, whereas independent claims 1 and 17 more generally refer to the answerback message as "referring to" the originally-transmitted message.

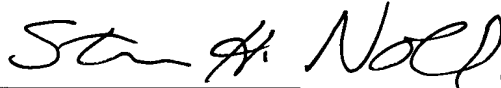
In the Sansone et al. reference, although rate table data and other types of service data are communicated between the data center and the terminal equipment, and at least rate table data are communicated between the USPS and the data

center, there is no disclosure or suggestion to verify the correct, original transmission of the data by forming a return or answerback message that refers to, or is coded based on, the originally-transmitted message or data. Verification of correct transmission may take place in other ways, but the verification in Sansone et al. does not make use of an answerback or response that is formulated based on the originally transmitted information itself, as the basis for verifying correct transmission of the original information.

The Sansone et al. reference, therefore, does not disclose all of the method steps or all of the apparatus components of the independent claims of the present application, and therefore does not anticipate any of those claims. The respective sets of dependent claims add further method steps, or further structural elements, to the novel combinations of the respective independent claims, and therefore are not anticipated by Sansone et al. for the same reasons discussed above in connection with the independent claims.

All claims of the application are therefore submitted to be in condition for allowance, and early reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Submitted by,



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